Austria's Jewish Nobles, 1740–1918

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I

Between the two world wars the Austrian writer, Fritz von Herzmanovsky, wrote a novel entitled *Rout am Fliegenden Holländer*, a wistful allegory on the collapse of Old Austria, in which elegant and eminent people wine, dance and chat on an Adriatic cruise, and are then destroyed by a war.[1] Federico Fellini recently recreated the scene in his film, *E la nave va*, which is about opera singers who are actually torpedoed when the war of August 1914 catches them at sea. Neither Herzmanovsky nor Fellini is anything but respectful of their material. Indeed, the very title of Fellini's film suggests the viability of the old world which in 1914 collided with a new reality. Yet his imagery poses the same question as does Herzmanovsky's. Fellini's singers are reverent mourners bent on scattering the ashes of a dead singer near her favourite isle. But there is a rhinoceros on board! In one scene the cast sings Verdi at top voice for the ship's crew in the boiler room, in competition with the engine! When the torpedo hits, they are all on deck, chanting the *Requiem*! Can one take them seriously?

This is a question posed also when one hears today about the Austrian Jewish nobles.[2] Between the mid-eighteenth century and the end of the Monarchy in 1918, the Habsburgs bestowed a rather large number of ranks and titles on their subjects. Of these, in Austria, 443 new noble ranks fell to 326 Jewish families,[3] and an equivalent number went to some 350 Jewish families in Hungary.[4] This distribution was unique in Europe: nowhere else did Jews receive nobility on such a scale. It did not happen only in the distant past, but became especially intense in the Monarchy's last years. The bulk of this bourgeois ennoblement

[1]Fritz von Herzmanovsky-Orlando, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. II, Salzburg 1984.

[2]This paper is based on a lecture presented at the Leo Baeck Institute, New York, 18th December 1986. Since full documentation of Central European Jewish history will be presented in my forthcoming book, *A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670–1918*, Bloomington, Indiana 1988, only the most necessary material will be cited in the footnotes.

[3]The following derives from a collection of data that I have amassed over several years. A wealth of relevant material may be found in the unpublished dissertation of Hanns Jäger-Sunstenau, *Die geadelten Judenfamilien im vormärzlichen Wien*, Vienna 1950. Jäger's sociological method is unfortunately flawed, however. On the one hand, he includes in his collection any family ennobled at any time by any royal authority provided that family happened to be domiciled in Vienna prior to 1848. On the other hand, he excludes families ennobled in Austria-Hungary even before 1848, if they happened not to have been resident then in Vienna. His extensive statistical efforts are, therefore, not useful, either with regard to Habsburg ennoblement policy, or with regard to Austrian Jewish ennoblements.

[4]See my *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*, Boulder, Colorado–New York 1972, reprint 1986, chapter 1.

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occurred when, as it were, the ship was actually sinking. Is this not reason enough to ask whether they were in earnest?

Yet in this paper we will argue, much as Fellini does, that of course they were serious – they just lived in a different world. Our method will be sociological. The Jewish aristocracy breaks conveniently into three generational cohorts, one in the late eighteenth century, a second in the third quarter of the nineteenth, the last just before the war. We will study these individually, analysing who the new noblemen were and under what circumstances they received their high honours. In general the ennoblement of these Jews is a good index of the willingness of the Austrian state on the one hand, of the Austrian middle classes on the other, to work with each other in a period of rapid social, economic and cultural Westernisation. We will also learn something of the competence of both sides at handling the problems of the modern world. Finally, we will gain insight into the factor that lends the Herzmanovsky and Fellini stories their unreality: there is a risk involved in living in a politically fragile region, such as Central Europe was before the First World War – a risk of collapse.

II

Let us first touch briefly on some important background factors, namely the process by which one obtained ennoblement under the Habsburgs and how we know about it; and then the general role of the Jews in the sphere under study.

The power to create various aristocratic titles, or to bestow membership of a knightly order, lay with the holder of one or another royal title – in our case, with the head of the House of Habsburg in his Holy Roman or Austrian Imperial, his Bohemian, Hungarian or Galician Royal, or whichever of his various ducal capacities.[5] Just after 1800, when *Kaiser* Franz was being forced by Napoleon to abolish the old Holy Roman Empire, and to call himself Emperor of Austria only, he amalgamated a number of his powers for conferring nobility, and for practical purposes all that need concern us for the nineteenth century are his bestowal in Austria on the one hand, and Hungary on the other, of hereditary baronial and gentlemanly rank (plus in Austria the intermediate rank of *Ritterschaft*). In the period under review the *Kaiser* usually made such awards by appointment of individuals into the "Leopold", "Stephan", "Maria Theresia", "Iron Crown" and later on "Franz Josef" knightly orders, certain ranks of which more or less automatically brought heriditary nobility.[6]

The essential act of grace notwithstanding, ennoblement was not just a one-way process. From time immemorial it was customary for individuals who felt they had done worthy service to the ruler to propose themselves for membership

[5]Details of this in Berthold Waldstein-Wartenberg, 'Österreichisches Adelsrecht, 1802–1918', in *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, XVII–XVIII (1964–1965), pp. 109–146.

[6]Until 1884 appointment to one of the knightly orders automatically brought hereditary nobility. A reform in that year cancelled the automatic ennoblement in all but military cases. This resulted in a severe curtailing of ennoblements in the business sector in Austria, as will be discussed below. See *Wiener Zeitung*, 15th August 1884. Cf. Paul Vasili, *Die Wiener Gesellschaft*, Leipzig 1885, pp. 357ff.

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of a higher estate. Such self-nomination was logical, because in feudal times the ruler did not possess such bureaucratic mechanisms for discovering the worthiness of his subject as modern kings and presidents do; and it was necessary, because in those days one who lacked noble rank could not own land, the basic commodity and basic means of production. Ennoblement, then, also gave one a great deal of immunity from the laws which kept the commonality in place. It was too important to leave to the kings.

Because ennoblement was not just a matter of grace, but also a matter of petitioning, we have the benefit of knowing quite a bit about what transpired. This gives us, incidentally, another good reason for studying the ennobled Jews. A petition is a document that bureaucrats instinctively preserve. In ennoblement cases there were in addition special reasons for saving such documents: in each region of the Empire the ruler made laws in conjunction with assemblies of gentlemen – in other words, nobles; and those people cared about nothing so much as who sat in their ranks. They demanded explanations when their ruler introduced alien elements, and consequently both in Vienna and in Buda the authorities early on established ennoblement registries which survived. In their bulk they afford us today a unique insight into the mentalities of rulers and ruled alike.

The quality of the surviving records varies considerably. In many dossiers, for example, there are long letters, often virtual treatises by bureaucrats who were worried about whether the candidate should pay the tax normally required of new nobles – a tax off which the bureaucratic offices lived – or whether the candidate had the right citizenship, or whether, by changing his name, the son of a new noble had sacrificed his nobility. But in other much more important folders there is so very little material as to suggest early bureaucratic indulgence in what today we call document-shredding. In 1798, for example, two of the wealthiest bankers in Vienna, Nathan Arnstein and Bernhard Eskeles, sought noble rank at a moment when Napoleon was approaching the gates of the capital.[7] Virtually nothing survives in their ennoblement folders of what was all too clearly a very elaborate financial negotiation.

Moreover, after the 1860s when the constitutional era began in the Habsburg realm, the distribution of nobility took place on such a grand scale, that the whole petitioning process had to be streamlined. The petitions and Imperial justifications now became perfunctory, and the Court even began to return most submitted materials to the petitioners. For such reasons, historians frequently find the later ennoblement folders less than useful.

Nonetheless, we still can find out much of what happened in such later cases, because of an elaborate democratic participation in ennoblement matters after 1860 on the part of cabinet ministers and members of parliament. In the *Kaiser*'s private office the secretaries systematically kept track of such things. They always underlined that behind this or that more or less worthy businessman's request for an elevation in rank was a strong recommendation from the Imperial

[7]Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Vienna (henceforth cited as AVA), *Adelsakten* Arnstein, Eskeles, und Herz, 1798.

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Chancellor's press secretary, from the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture or from some other notable. Moreover, in summarising for their master's perusal the contents of a fat dossier, they were quite capable of writing bluntly that, for example, *Ritter* von Springer's main reason for wanting a barony, was that the former *Ritter* von Wodianer, von Schey, von Todesco, and von Königswarter, who were his peers at the stock exchange, were all made barons.[8] Thanks to such bluntness, despite the streamlining of the process, and the unfortunately massive havoc that the Second World War wrought in Austria's political archives we have insight into the ennoblement system even for the late Habsburg period.

How much did nobility cost? On 6th August 1806 *Kaiser* Franz I. abdicated as Holy Roman Emperor. In the days following, perhaps to compensate for his injured feelings, he engaged in one of his favourite occupations, the acquisition of horses; and he accepted from Rafael Picciotto, a Jewish merchant who was his consul at Aleppo in Syria, seven magnificent Arabian steeds, worth, according to the Imperial *Stallmeister*, 15–20,000 Florins. Franz then consulted his chief ministers as to what he might give in return. The Chancellor, Count Stadion, deliberated weightily, and on 11th August replied that the stable personnel might get 100 Ducats each, that the Janissaries of the Imperial *Internuntius*, who had accompanied the caravan through the Balkans from Constantinople, might be given 50 Ducats each, but that Picciotto had best receive either nobility or a barony together with a *tabatière* bearing the Imperial coat of arms. Franz opted for elevation of his servitor into the *Ritterstand*, the second lowest rank of the Austrian nobility. Seven stallions less one "decorated" tobacco-box – that was the price of a middling noble rank in Franz's day.[9]

In general, and levity apart, there were certain routines that affected the price. In some cases, especially those of military servitors, the *Kaiser*, of his grace, would make an award "tax-free", but in all but the rarest civilian cases there was a fixed scale of taxes which one had to pay to the heraldic office and to the office of the order to which one was admitted. The higher the rank, the higher the tax. Thus practically everyone had to pay something. In addition, in most cases it was anticipated that the honoured individual, especially if he had wealth, would give something to charity. One had to make one's own decisions about what would be sufficient, and people who perhaps felt their merits to be inadequate sometimes made very substantial donations to homes for the care of the unmarried daughters of old soldiers, or some such, which bore the name of this or that member of the Imperial family. And finally there were apparently ways of winning backing for one's ennoblement through political acts; in the eighteenth century, for example, one heard of Jewish businessmen who engaged in espionage work for the Austrian government in Poland or the Ottoman lands.[10] In the nineteenth century there was frequent talk of propaganda work in London, Paris, Berlin or Madrid by eager candidates. And then there is

[8] *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kanzlei* (henceforth cited as HHStA, *K*), 1872–1431.
[9] AVA, *Adelsakten* Picciotto, 1806.
[10] Franz Putz, *Die österreichische Wirtschaftsaristokratie, 1815–1859*, unpublished dissertation, Vienna 1975, pp. 170–172.

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considerable (generally unverifiable) evidence that flat payments to influential officials could bring gratifying results.[11]

So much for the ennoblement process. Why, now, should we, in connection with the Habsburgs' distribution of ranks and titles, be studying Jews? Were Jews so greatly in preponderance among the new nobles of the old Empire? Were they so major a part of the Empire's "new classes" as to merit singling out? Initially, the answer to the first question seems to be negative. Of 12,414 elevations in rank distributed in the Habsburgs' Austrian crownlands between 1701 and 1918, only 443 went to Jews[12] (and let us insert here that for such statistical purposes, and in general for the historical sociology of this paper – and as now normally accepted by historians – a conversion out of the Jewish religion does not create a "non-Jew".) Even in Hungary, where during the Monarchy's last years ennoblement was considerably more frequent than in Austria, among very many thousands of ennoblements, only some 350 went to Jews, as has been remarked. These figures are wholly disproportionate to the 4.6% of the Cisleithian population that according to the census of 1910 was Jewish by religion, or to the 4.5% of the Hungarian population that was then Jewish.[13] It was overwhelmingly to Christians, especially to Christian soldiers, that the *Kaiser* gave noble rank.

But when the scope of our question is narrowed the answer begins to change. In Austria in over two centuries only 1,242 changes in rank were accorded to professional merchants, bankers and industrialists, yet of these, 299 – very nearly a quarter – were allotted to Jews.[14] In a shorter period of large scale business-world ennoblements – 1850–1884 – about 100 out of 498, only a fifth, went to Jews.[15] It is evident, nonetheless, that Jews had much more than their share of business-world ennoblements; and this is our first reason for studying them here.

A far greater reason for studying ennobled Jews concerns the general role that Jews played in Greater Austria's newly arisen "middle class" in our period. It is notoriously difficult in any society to pin down whom the "middle class" comprises. One must ask, for example, who is above, who below the "middle"? One must determine whether to be concerned just with the city population, or with the entire society – a very important question in an agrarian world such as pre-1918 Austria still was. And what does one do when there are a lot of ennobled bureaucrats in the towns, yet relatively few capitalists and industrialists? What does one do when in particular the capitalists are considered in some way "foreign" to the rest of society, whereas the bureaucrats are considered "native"? And what does one do when the towns in general speak different dialects from the

[11]There is a lurid, but seemingly well-informed discussion of prices in a novel by a bank president published shortly before the First World War: Adolf Dessauer, *Großstadtjuden*, Vienna 1910, chapter 7.

[12]Jäger-Sunstenau, *Die geadelten Judenfamilien*, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

[13]See the convenient compilation of statistics in Wolfdieter Bihl, 'Die Juden', in Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch (eds.), *Die Habsburger Monarchie, 1848–1918*, III/2, Vienna 1980, pp. 882–883.

[14]Jäger-Sunstenau, *Die geadelten Judenfamilien*, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

[15]My calculation.

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countryside or when various parts of a state's territory speak a different language? All these questions are highly relevant to any definition of Austria's "middle class", and none commands a ready answer. One could say, quite simply, that there was no such thing as a "middle class" common to all the Habsburg Empire. Yet when one studies the profile of Austria's Jewish population alongside that of virtually any other ethnic element in the Empire, one readily perceives striking "middle class" qualities. By 1900, for example, 12.8% of all the Jews in the Austrian lands lived in Lower Austria, i.e. in Vienna, where they composed about 5% of the whole population.[16] Of the 66.2% of Jews who lived in Galicia, moreover, forming 11% of the total population there, almost a third lived in 40 cities and towns.[17] In the two capitals of Galicia, Cracow and Lwow, Jews comprised 29.6% and 29% of the population, respectively. In cities such as Kolomea and Stanislawow they made up over 50% of the population. In Hungary at the same time 23.9% of all the Jews lived in Budapest, where they comprised 23% of the whole population.[18] And in general, whether in Galicia, Hungary, or the Bohemian lands, there was a strong trend in the Jewish population out of villages, into towns and cities. No other ethnic element in the Empire had such a dominantly urban profile. Even 75% of the Germans still lived out in the villages before the First World War.[19] In Greater Hungary the agricultural population was then 68.5% of the whole.[20] Among the Habsburg Poles, 80% were engaged in agriculture in 1910; among the Ruthenians, 94%.[21]

If one turns to other yardsticks for defining "middle class" one will again find the Jews, despite the overwhelming poverty of a large proportion of their population, in the lead. For example, if one looks at the percentile of the populations of Austria engaged in commerce in 1900, one finds that 8% of all Christians were so occupied, whereas 43.7% of all Jews were. 20.5% of all persons in commerce in the Austrian lands were Jewish, though Jews were under 5% of the population. In "industry" the disproportion was less: in 1900, 26.8% of all the Christians and 28.7% of all Jews were thus occupied, and the Jews were only 5% of all Austrians so engaged.[22] But, as is well known, in the liberal professions Jews figured in disproportion to their share in the population. In the Austrian lands, patterns of conversion veiled the reality, but in 1900, 22.8% of the law students, 39.6% of the medical students and 18.2% of the philosophy students were Jewish.[23] In Hungary in 1910, 45.2% of all lawyers were Jewish,

[16]Jacob Thon, *Die Juden in Österreich*, Berlin 1908, p. 8.
[17]Calculated from *ibid.*, pp. 8, 17.
[18]Alajos Kovács, *A zsidóság térfoglalása Magyarországon*, Budapest 1922, pp. 17, 60.
[19]Peter Urbanitsch, 'Die Deutschen', in Wandruszka and Urbanitsch (eds.), *Die Habsburger Monarchie, op. cit.*, III/1, p. 51.
[20]István Hoóz, *Népesedés politika és népeség fejlödés Magyarországon*, Budapest 1970, p. 67.
[21]H. Batowski, 'Die Polen', in Wandruszka and Urbanitsch (eds.), *Die Habsburger Monarchie, op. cit.*, III/1, p. 540.
[22]Thon, *Die Juden in Österreich, op. cit.*, p. 112.
[23]*Österreichische Statistik*, LXX/3, pp. 2–5.

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48.9% of all doctors, 42.4% of the journalists.[24] One need hardly mention that there was nothing "typical" about the Jews in the Habsburg Monarchy. Like all other ethnic groups, they were distinctive and peculiar and they were regarded as different in every way. But all told, one can safely say that it is important to study the Jews among the Habsburg new nobles, because the Jews on an Empire-wide basis were probably more representative of the "middle class" of Habsburg society than any other ethnic element.

The very important, albeit seldom recognised, third reason for looking at the Habsburg Jews concerns the extraordinary material success of their modernisation in the nineteenth century. This is best suggested by the demographic record. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there were two main bodies of Jewry under Habsburg rule: on the one hand, about 140,000 in the Bohemian Lands and in Western Hungary; on the other a huge number in newly-acquired Galicia (212,000 in 1785). Most probably the real Galician Jewish population was above the count, and the Galician percentage of the whole Habsburg Jewry was in the region of 66%.

Seen from the point of view of modernisation, this distribution implied great problems. Of the "Western" Habsburg Jews in the late eighteenth century, many still lived in villages, and virtually none lived yet in Vienna. But they included in Prague perhaps the largest single urban Jewish community of all Europe. Further, the Enlightenment – in particular that aspect of it pertaining to the German-language education – had a start among them. The Galicians were far less prepared for change, however. They were Polish Jews, much poorer than was common further West, much more exposed to the "medieval" Jewish past, much less open to outside influences. It did not seem probable that this vast reservoir of Eastern Jews would soon join the Western world.

Yet during the nineteenth century, in large part because of the freedom of movement increasingly afforded to Jews by the Habsburg state, a great leap into modernity did occur. As was to be anticipated, the Bohemians and Moravians led the way. By 1910 their transformation was so great that the bulk of them were already living in the large modern urban Jewish communities of Vienna and Budapest, which were 127,318 and 203,687 strong, respectively. The old rural communities of Bohemia and Moravia were actually losing population in the face of this tremendous urbanisation movement. Even Prague Jewry was adversely affected relatively speaking, so great was the "outwards and upwards" movement among the Western Habsburg Jews to the two capitals. But this was by no means all that had happened. During the first half of the century in particular there was huge Jewish demographic movement from Galicia into Hungary. In the second half of the century the Jewish emigration from Galicia was more into Bukovina, to Vienna and overseas. But it was still massive. And as a result the proportions of Habsburg Jewry radically changed. On the eve of the First World War there were still tremendous numbers of Jews in Galicia (871,895) and notoriously huge numbers of them were still poor and ultra-Orthodox. But there were more Jews now in Hungary than in Galicia (932,458).

[24]Kovács, *A zsidóság térfoglalása*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

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Further, the percentile of Habsburg Jewry still perforce in Galicia was down from two thirds to about 35%. And even in Galicia, not to speak of rural Hungary or rural Bukovina, the road to the big cities was well-trod – Galician Jewry now had a way out.

This is not to suggest that Habsburg Jewry had, *in toto*, become modern by 1914, much less that it no longer had any problems. Given the whole Empire's nagging "backwardness" and the awakening of modern antisemitism, the contrary seems true. But it can safely be suggested that within the Habsburg Empire in the nineteenth century Jewry had accomplished a high degree of self-transformation. Indeed, because of the large number of Polish Jews involved, this may be considered to have been a greater self-transformation than any other in Europe, which is our third major reason for studying ennoblement of Jews.

To summarise: Jews were disproportionately prominent among the ennobled members of the Austrian middle class. The Jewry to which these nobles belonged was, moreover, more representative of that middle class than any other ethnic element in the Empire; and it was a Jewry which is intrinsically interesting for its success at the historic middle-class task of self-modernisation.

III

We should now examine precisely the particular Jews who were ennobled. As noted earlier, they fall into three great "generational" cohorts. Let us consider these *seriatim*, noting in each case first the character of the cohort as a whole, and second what it tells about the shifting relationships between Habsburg Jewry, Austria's middle class and the State.

The first generational grouping was notably small: it comprised some 26 families who received their nobility prior to 1848, with the largest number by far receiving it in the age of the French Revolution and of Europe's struggle with Napoleon. Who were these new nobles? In point of origin they came from all over. Almost half the cohort was from Bohemia where most of pre-1772 Habsburg Jewry lived, but three families had long been resident in Vienna, three were from Hungary, eight of the families were from the Germanies, and four from the Sephardic West. The latter had come from the West to help in the development of the backward lands to the East, typical examples of the supranational European Jewry of that day, and typical servitors of the then supranational Habsburg State.

Professionally this group was strikingly monochrome. There were three "intellectuals" (Joseph von Sonnenfels, Moses Dobruschka and Ankerberg), one lawyer (Joel), and one clear-cut "industrialist" (Porges). Almost all the rest could best be defined as "military contractors" or "bankers" (which is not to belittle them). Since the Austrian economy was "backward" at the time, and since military contracting and banking played a large role in it, these people were in fact the leading Jews in the Austrian bourgeoisie. Further, there was plenty of variety within such general professional rubrics. One can hardly claim that the Hönigs of Kuttenplan or the Poppers of Prague, typically Bohemian general

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traders and tobacco-tax collectors, were comparable in point of profession to such German war-profiteers as Ferdinand Arenfeld from Fürth in Bavaria or Abraham Kriegshaber from Swabia, who made their money in Joseph II's Eastern wars. Nor were Diego Aguilar, the founder of Karl VI's tobacco monopoly, and Simon Lämel, the Bohemian merchant and credit-banker, on a par as "bankers" with Salomon Rothschild. But as a professional group, this cohort was at first sight not diverse.

Much the same may be said of this band's social complexion. Virtually all the families in the group were wealthy, some of them extremely wealthy by the time of their ennoblement. Though in some cases this was old wealth (Wertheimstein, Arnstein), in others new (Rothschild), there is only one true "rags to riches" case in the whole group (Sonnenfels), and even he was the grandson of a famous rabbi. What is more, almost all the families were a-typical Jews. In fact only eleven out of the twenty-six had not converted by the time the recipient of the title died, and several even of these eleven were decidedly less than pious.

These uniform aspects of the cohort have inclined some historians to negative attitudes.[25] It has struck them that the ennoblement of these people signified an unholy alliance between the wealthiest Austrian "bourgeois" Jews and the political authorities of the Christian world, nothing more. Such an assessment supports the conventional analysis that the Jews of Europe made a great mistake right at the start of the modern period – that they somehow needlessly gave themselves over to a corrupting and self-destructive assimilation into the Christian world.[26]

But let us look further and recall some features of the age. The political authorities in question were not just unattractive antisemites and reactionaries. They were Maria Theresia, the enlightened creator of a modern state in a Central Europe that sorely needed one; her son Joseph II, who among other emancipatory acts decreed tolerance for the Jews, the first European ruler to do so; and Joseph's nephew Franz, who for all his reactionary qualities, did fight long and heroically against Napoleonic tyranny. Nor did Franz revoke Joseph's Judeophile legislation. For the Jews of the day, these were not such unattractive protectors.

There is yet another quality of this first ennobled Austrian Jewish cohort to be noted, alongside its professional uniformity, its wealth and its renegacy: namely, its sheer individuality. Virtually every one of these families followed truly extraordinary historical paths. A few names suffice to make the point. Alois Wiener "von Sonnenfels", the convert son of a Berlin rabbi, was an intellectual-of-all-trades, who was ennobled seemingly because his alchemist skills appealed to Maria Theresia's husband. Wiener was a witch-doctor of sorts, and his son, Josef played an indispensible role in Austria's theatrical and linguistic history and became a major architect of the great Empress's state.[27] No history of

[25]See for example Salo W. Baron, *Die Judenfrage auf dem Wiener Kongress*, Vienna 1920, p. 145.
[26]Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto. The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870*, Cambridge, Mass. 1973, chapter 12.
[27]See most recently Josef Karniel, 'Josef von Sonnenfels', in *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte*, VII, Tel-Aviv 1978, pp. 111–158.

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Central Europe would be complete without mention of Josef von Sonnenfels's unique record. Little less astounding is the story of the Dobruschkas, who, as tax-farmers, became by the 1770s the only Jews permitted to live in the Moravian capital, Brno. The poet Moses Dobruschka, who was responsible for the family's ennoblement, early in the 1770s came under the influence of his mother's cousin, the Podolian pseudo-Messiah, Jakob Frank, who had fled to Brno after the first partition of Poland. In the late 1770s, as Frank's disciple, young Dobruschka made a seemingly false conversion as part of an apparent conspiracy to repeat in Austria Frank's earlier romantic effort – to emancipate Polish Jewry by tricking the authorities into ennobling Frankists. Mystification pervaded Dobruschka's career! The conspiracy played a large part in the beginnings of Jewish ennoblement in Austria, but in general failed; whereupon early in Joseph II's reign "Thomas von Schönfeld", as Dobruschka now called himself, attempted to bring large numbers of prominent Jews to liberty through the Masonic movement. And when the *Kaiser* quashed that venture, our hero shifted paths and names again, and ended up as "Junius Frei", a professed universal revolutionary in Paris, who died with Danton on the guillotine.[28]

Next is the Hönig family, which like the Dobruschkas waxed wealthy in the eighteenth century as tax-farmers in Bohemia. In the 1770s one after the other of the younger scions of this family converted, changed their names and were ennobled, and then entered Viennese high society as art and music patrons. They were founding members of what was later called the "second society" of the capital. But the eldest son, Israel, chose another path: he studied the highways and byways of the tobacco trade; and when Joseph II came to the throne he became the *Kaiser*'s instrument for creating an Austrian State Tobacco monopoly staffed extensively with Jews. Today's ubiquitous Central European *Trafik* was really Hönig's creation. And Hönig induced Joseph to make him Austria's first non-baptised Jewish nobleman.[29] It suffices just to mention two more names. Nathan von Arnstein was a principal Vienna banker of the Napoleonic era, whose wife, Fanny Itzig of Berlin, became one of Vienna's leading hostesses. Perhaps it is no great merit, but she won the resentment of present-day Austrian historians by introducing the Christmas tree to that city, though a Jewess![30] Finally let us mention Salomon von Rothschild, who procured titles and lands for himself and his brothers in 1816–1818, as the price for his settling in Vienna and for becoming Metternich's banker.

These, the first of Austria's Jewish nobles, were a fascinating cluster of talented people, who pursued imaginative careers. They acquired their riches through commerce and banking because of the traditional Jewish professional mould, not because they were opulent millionaires, somehow alienated from the masses, who "sold out" to the forces of "Reaction" by acquiring nobility. And if one looks at them without the prejudice of modern labels, one recognises that

[28]See in general Gershom Scholem, *Du Frankisme au Jacobinisme*, Paris 1981; but also Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe, 1723–1939*, Cambridge, Mass 1970, *passim*.
[29]Jäger-Sunstenau, *Die geadelten Judenfamilien*, *op. cit.*, pp. 131–138.
[30]See Hilde Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein oder die Emanzipation. Ein Frauenleben an der Zeitenwende 1758–1818*, Frankfurt a. Main 1962.

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they were in effect a Jewish intelligentsia comparable to the intelligentsias developed by other European nations in the age of national reawakening.

This intelligentsia no doubt had a pronounced self-rejecting aspect. But was self-rejection so unusual in an age when from London to Moscow "enlightened" non-Jews were aspiring to convert massively peasant and fanatically Christian populations into nations of city-dwelling Voltaires and Rousseaus? And what alternatives did these Jews have? Was there some other way, readily available at that time, to achieve the modernisation of the Habsburg Jews? Here is the crux of the matter. The great mass of Jewry was then simply not inclined to adapt to the times, nor did it have the means or the leadership to do so. The Jews of the East were prepared to follow a Baal Shem Tov into higher spirituality, or a Gaon of Vilna into ever more sublime traditionalist intellectual activity; but as a century of Eastern Jewish resistance to *Haskalah* was to show, they were not willing to follow Moses Mendelssohn with any alacrity into philosophical Western Humanism; and as the case of Jakob Frank showed, they were not willing to follow even a "King of the Jews" into secular modernism. Amidst such conditions, what was an Austrian Jewish "secular humanist" of the late eighteenth century to do? It is against this question that one must assess the behaviour of those who decided to become Austrian nobles. And in the absence of alternatives it is not hard to construe that for all their self-rejection, this was a representative intelligentsia – a respectable national leadership of the Jews capable of respectable choices.

How, finally, may we assess the relationship between this Jewish modernist intelligentsia and the Austrian State that is symptomised by the ennoblement of all these families? Self-evidently, it was not an equal relationship, for ennoblement specifically implied subjection; nor was it the same sort of relationship that emerged at the time between the leaderships of other ethnic groups in Central Europe and the State, for the bond was personal to the individuals and families involved, not to Jewry as a whole. But by the same token we can judge that it was a perfectly dignified relationship – almost everyone in Europe in those days was involved in some sort of subjection to the State. To some extent, until 1805 national independence was a figment of the French and Polish imaginations! Moreover, the a-national, personal character of the relationship was not really so abnormal. The Czartoryskis, Szechényis and Barons vom Stein alike throbbed for their nations' welfare, but in practice acted suspiciously like aristocrats. Robespierre acted as a lawyer, despite his love for the people, and any German will remind us that he did not love all the people – just the French. Hegel, finally, remained a poet-philosopher despite his Germanness with no less vigour than Rothschild remained a banker who was a Jew.

The relationship was obviously something less than a contract for the protection and emancipation of the Jews. But on the other hand, since at that time nobility brought individual relief from the laws, it must be acknowledged that some real value was exchanged. And, at least in the non-convert cases, the State demonstrably felt that it was doing something for all Jews. But what was it? The answer to our question lies perhaps in an ennoblement dossier of 1797 in which the *Kaiser*'s chief Minister, Count Saurau, solemnly advised "a very strict

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parsimony in the distribution of acts of Grace, so as to sustain their worth, and their effectiveness as signs of special favour, encouragement and praise".[31] The point is that even though ennoblement may seem to many of us in the twentieth century, a petty business, everyone at that time took it seriously, because there were no other tools available for forming the sort of mutually advantageous alliance that is desirable between the State and the Jews.

There were, of course, risks in our first cohort's undertaking. But what historical enterprise has not been fraught with risks, especially in the deprived sections of this imperfect world. In this case there were no visible alternatives, and consequently, as relationships between ruling states and Central European intelligentsias then went, we judge that the compact was not without merit.

IV

Let us turn now to the second generational cohort of the Jewish nobles, which was created between the suppression of the revolutions in 1849 and the shift in the ennoblement procedure in 1884. This group comprised 161 families which had not previously been honoured. With our procedure established, we can advance rapidly.

In point of geographic *locus*, the group was much more Austrian than its predecessor. 89 families were resident in Vienna at the time of ennoblement (though many of these, of course, had not been born there); 17 were resident in the Bohemian lands; 11 lived in Trieste; 12 in Hungary, 5 in Galicia. There was still a cluster of 18 who were not Austrian or Hungarian citizens, almost all of them German or West European bankers ennobled at a moment in the late 1860s when the Austrian Chancellor, Baron Friedrich Beust, was trying to organise foreign credit to finance a recovery from (and perhaps revenge for) Austria's military defeat at the hands of Bismarck's Prussia.[32] But the remainder of the cohort were military personnel whose residence varied because they belonged to the ultimately Austrian institution, the *k.u.k.* Army.

In point of profession, again, this band was very unlike its predecessor. A hundred still came from the business world, but even they were much more diversified than their peers in the first generational cohort. There were bankers, as before, and also some military contractors and some general merchants. But as early as 1860 one found among the bankers not just the heads of private banking houses, such as Rothschild and Arnstein had been, but hired officials of the new joint-stock banks which just then began to dominate the Continent. Alongside the old military contractors were now railway builders and engineers, the technical experts and entrepreneurs who in the thirty mid-century years literally transformed the face not just of Austria, but of Europe. Next we find

[31] AVA, *Adelsakten* Arenfeld, 1797.

[32] Bernhard Meyer, *Erlebnisse*, Vienna 1875, II, pp. 99ff; and Beust's explanation of his policies to Franz Josef in HHStA, *K*, 1869–489. Cf. the individual proposals in *K*, 1867, 73, 4006 (Kaskel); *K*, 1869–651 (Schlesinger and French bankers); *K*, 1870, 3,490 (Kaufmann Asser); *K*, 10, 1871, 2002 (Erlanger); *K*, 1870, 13, 2485 (Worms).

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amidst the merchants in our group not only wholesale purveyors of grain, cotton, wool and silk, as in the past, but a number of modern stock-brokers. Beside them were industrialists – distillers and manufacturers of paper, fezes and matches, sugar and lumber tycoons, mine-owners. The business sector of the cohort was complemented by insurance brokers and lawyers, technicians of a type which had earlier been wholly absent. The group thus obviously reflects the much more complex Austrian economy of the third quarter of the century. And in addition one can discern new professional types. Most importantly the cohort features nine journalists and publishers, a clear suggestion not just of the degree to which the press had become a major force in nineteenth-century Europe, but also of how in Central Europe journalism had become a major outlet for "surplus" Jewish intellectuals. A few intellectuals do figure in the group: most notably the poet-archivist, Ludwig August Frankl, the playwrights Salomon Mosenthal and Josef Weil von Weilen, and the actor Adolf von Sonnenthal. But the group is notably deficient as a representation of the Jewish role in Austrian culture in the period, probably because Franz Josef just did not think culture deserved high honours as did his soldiers. Of these last, as mentioned above, there were far more in this group than their had been in the first generational cohort (31 patents in all). There were also eleven medical doctors (seven of them army doctors), some professors and finally a number of bureaucrats, some of them, for example the converts Karl Hock, August von Wehli, and Josef Unger, extremely distinguished.

This group differs finally from its predecessor in the degree to which religious Jews were participant. Though in the 1850s only two out of 30 patents distributed to Jews went to religious Jews (Reform, not Orthodox, of course), in the 1860s the percentile was up to 50% of double that distribution. By the early 1880s the ennoblement of religious Jews was so common that reports were credited of a certain Moses Waldberg of Iasi in Moldavia appearing at the *Hofburg* to receive his barony in a kaftan.[33]

All these data confirm that this generation of Jewish nobles was much more decisively "bourgeois" or "middle class" than the earlier one. These were undeniably rich people. To some extent no doubt they were "old rich". In 1861, for example, Anselm Rothschild was the first Jew admitted to the Austrian *Herrenhaus*; and a very considerable proportion of the Vienna Jewish nobles of this generation were from families which had resided in Vienna before 1848, when Jews had had to demonstrate a considerable wealth if they wanted to live there. Those "tolerees" as they were called, now formed a conscious elite of older wealth within the entirety of nineteenth-century Austrian Jewish society.[34] But on the other hand, especially in the 1870s, there were examples of people being awarded ennoblement on the basis of fairly modest and explicitly new wealth. And it is clear from the economic history of the time that even people born at the

[33]See *Semigotha. Weimarer historisch-genealogisches Taschenbuch des gesamten Adels jehudäischen Ursprunges*, Weimar 1912, p. 234. The report was almost certainly false, given Waldberg's record as a lawyer for Romanian aristocrats, but what counts is the fact that it struck contemporaries as credible. Cf. HHStA, *K*, 1872, 3089; *K*, 1884, 2326.

[34]Sigmund Mayer, *Die Wiener Juden. Kommerz, Kultur, Politik 1700–1900*, Vienna 1917, pp. 273ff.

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top of the economic pyramid were making much more money now than they had possessed before. This was the renowned *Gründerzeit* – a period of extravagant capitalist speculation in Central Europe. Even the "old" rich were making enough money in this period to re-qualify as "new".

There is no need to debate the matter of labels here. Despite the journalists, professors and doctors, this cohort represented no intelligentsia, but a corruptible bourgeoisie. And we can observe in addition that the smell of corruption was strong in the ennoblement process now. Right at the start of the period, in 1854, Minister Alexander Bach pressed heavily for the principled distribution of ranks and titles to businessmen in Bohemia as a means of encouraging a state loan, that would enable the Government to recover from the Revolution.[35] That a sizeable group of Trieste businessmen received honours in the fifties strongly suggests that even the sterlingly honest Minister von Bruck (whose base in Austria was Trieste) acted in that decade to gain ranks and titles for his friends.[36] With the advent of the sixties, the recipients of nobility included ever more prominently property and stock exchange speculators from the capital, people like the earlier mentioned Baron von Springer, whose worthiness of special honour was everywhere said to have been supplemented by gold.[37] As noted earlier, the archives are full of evidence that Baron Beust encouraged a lucrative *Ordensjägerei* in the Danube's business world. In the early 1870s it seemed that a quick way for an Austrian businessman to acquire rank was to make contact with certain officials of the newly established Hungarian Government.[38] By then the ruling party in the Vienna regime was in at least a few cases deliberately using ennoblement to win election campaigns,[39] and whereas in Austria this abuse probably soon passed, by the 1880s the ruling party at Budapest was collecting political funds in such fashion on a grand scale.[40]

Why did Austrian Jews of the *Gründer* era swallow the bait? One explanation is commonplace. Historians have opined widely that the Central European middle classes were by nature weak and treacherous, and consequently collaborated with the old, decaying nobilities of the region through imitation of the noble way of life, through adoption of pseudo-aristocratic manners and standards.[41] But there's a problem here. We observed earlier that in the nineteenth century

[35]HHStA, *MCZ* 3737/1854, as cited in Christoph Stölzl, *Die Ära Bach in Böhmen*, Munich 1971, p. 86, note 23.

[36]One may associate Bruck with three Jewish ennoblements (Minerbi, Morpurgo, Weil-Weiss), and with the following Christian ennoblements in the 1850s: Benvenuti (1852), Lutteroth (1852), Gossleith (1855), Tacchi (1854), Gutmannsthal (1859).

[37]For lurid stories see Wilhelm Angerstein, *Volkswirthschaftliche Zustände*, Leipzig, 1871, pp. 8ff; Albert Schäffle, *Aus meinem Leben*, Berlin 1905, I, p. 234; Annelise Rohrer, *Die Wiener Effektenbörse und ihre Besucher*, unpublished dissertation, Vienna 1971, pp. 172ff.

[38]Relevant cases in the early 1870s were Lippmann, Gerson, Flesch, Rosenberg, Brüll, Bauer, most of whom seem to have been connected with the Franco-Hungarian Bank, and with Hungarian sugar production. See especially HHStA, *K* 1971, 10, 1987. See the clear evidence of Hungarian intervention in *K*, 1867–4042 (widow Goldberger) and *K* 1869–1342 (Springer-Schlesinger).

[39]HHStA, *K*, 1862 21, 3923 (Todesco); *K*, 1866–1373 (Schey); AVA, *Adelsakten* Oppenheimer, 1868, 1879.

[40]See McCagg, *Jewish Nobles, op. cit.*, chapter 5.

[41]*Ibid.*, pp. 35ff.

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Austrian Jewry was in some degree a success. Certainly, the achievements of this generation of Jewish nobles, listed above, do not attest "weakness". So does such a generic explanation hold? Once again, it seems well before closing judgement to look at the circumstances more closely, and in particular to ask about alternatives that the prosperous leadership of a modernising Jewish society may have had.

Scrutiny promptly brings to light the fact that the position of the Austrian middle classes, and particularly of the Jewish contingent within them, was awkward. The drama of the *Gründerzeit* began, after all, with the middle-class catastrophe of 1848–1849. Literally everywhere in the Habsburg Empire in those two eventful years, the middle classes rose up in rebellion against the sterility of Metternich – and everywhere too, even before the Imperial Army put the revolutions down, the middle classes splintered over questions of nationality and class. For middle-class Central Europe, no matter what one's ethnic allegiance, 1848–1849 thus witnessed a profound political frustration, the burial of white-hot hopes that the liberties of Liberal France and England could be introduced here also. For a decade after 1849, moreover, middle-class Central Europe had to exist under a markedly cruel political absolutism. These experiences parlously confused the middle-class moral world. If such injustices were possible, how was one to behave, if one were a good bourgeois, interested in a politically calm existence? Was one to fight on without limitation for liberal principles, or might one compromise? And the confusion was the worse for the Jews because for them 1848–1849 had brought not only bitter middle-class disappointment, but Jewish political victory. Franz Josef had not revoked in 1849 the revolutionary legislation cancelling the old exclusion of Jews from civic society. In this sense the Jews had reason to be grateful to the absolutist regime.

In the 1860s the moral confusion increased. In 1859, just when political absolutism collapsed in Austria, and middle-class Liberalism regained the political initiative, Imperial Austria's unity collapsed too. For the middle classes of non-German ethnicity this was perhaps no great loss, but for German-speaking sections it meant new humiliation. This loss in 1859, moreover, was only the first of several. In the course of a decade the administratively united and seemingly German-speaking Empire of the past fell to pieces. The Austrian Germans were expelled from the newly founded German *Reich*, and they were compelled even within the Habsburg area to divide the political spoils with the Magyar-speaking nobles of old Hungary. In sum, by 1868, they were a battered lot, indeed, and among them of course were many Jews. Not all the Jews of the Empire were at that time German speakers, so one cannot construe that all the Austrian Jews were hereby cast into great sadness. But for those who did speak German – and this included all the Jews of Vienna, most of the modernised Jews of Bohemia and Galicia, and many even in Hungary – there was once again a confusing double message: as Jews and Liberals they had won, but as German Austrians they had lost.

It was precisely at this moment of moral confusion and political defeat that the Central European middle classes had to face the problem of gentrification. During the 1850s, despite the advice of Minister Bach, Franz Josef was sparing in

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his middle-class ennoblements. In 1860, however, immediately after the defeat of Solferino and coincident with the start of his search for constitutional domestic arrangements within Austria, the *Kaiser* changed policy and started systematically throwing ranks and titles to the leadership of the German-speaking bourgeoisie of the whole Empire, and specifically to the leaders of the Jewish *Kultusgemeinde* of his capital.[42] In the course of the decade, as political disaster after political disaster struck German Austria, the *Kaiser* created a glittering elite of ennobled capitalists and industrialists, including Jews and Christians of wealth indiscriminantly from all over the Empire. There can be no doubt of the morale-building intention behind this distribution of honours: it reached its peak in the years of the political *Ausgleich* with Hungary and Prussia. And though today we can see it as a politically backward-looking, anachronistic and corruptive bid by the Throne for collaboration, one should recall that for the new nobles of the day, it was accompanied by all sorts of fashionable opportunities for middle-class cohabitation with the aristocracy on the then newly-built *Ringstrasse* around old Vienna; and by the public enthusiasm of a great speculatory bubble on the stock exchange there.

The Austrian *Gründerzeit* was a period, as we can today see, of wholly false standards. Hypocrisy, illusions of grandeur, theatricality ran amok. Objectively, the bourgeoisie no doubt did "sell out" in a most crass fashion. But could anyone see the objective reality? Let us recall a quip attributed to Jonas Königswarter, a banker and property speculator who was President of the Vienna Jewish community, when he was made baron in 1870. When a titled Christian fellow-speculator congratulated him with the words: "Oh what wonderful times we live in, when Jews become barons!" Königswarter is said to have replied: "And when counts become Jews!"[43]

Which is to say that the continuation of Jewish ennoblement in the period after 1848 in Austria was, while not a perfect compromise between the State and the middle class, a reasonable compromise in an imperfect world where the alternatives were moot, and in which all established values had been turned upside down.

V

The third and final cohort of Austrian Jewish nobles comprised 139 families who were first ennobled between 1884 and 1918 when the Monarchy collapsed. At first view, this generation does not seem very different from its predecessor, the

[42]The special bid to the Jews consisted of ennoblements in 1859–1860 for the Schey, Biedermann and Königswarter families; in 1861, coincidentally with the admission of Baron Rothschild to the *Herrenhaus*, for the Todescos; and then in 1862 for Rothschild's secretaries, Goldschmidt and von Wertheimstein. All these people were directly connected with the leadership of Vienna, and thus of all Austria's Jewry. See the contemporary recognition of the overture in Max (Meir) Letteris's *Wiener Mitteilungen. Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Kunst, Geschichte, orientalische Studien und Kultur-Zustände*, Wien 1860, pp. 81–85.

[43]*Wiener Kirchenzeitung*, XXIV, No. 5 (4th February 1884), p. 1.

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one of 1849–1884. Once again there were rather few foreigners (7 in all), a preponderance of Viennese (81 out of 139), lots of soldiers from all the Crown Lands (46) and a smattering of mainly business-men from Bohemia (17), Trieste (4), Galicia (11) and Hungary (3). On inspection, however, we perceive that the cohort's outstanding feature is an unevenness in the elements of the Austrian-Jewish bourgeoisie which were represented.

It is readily apparent, for example, that top officials of the great Viennese banks won nobility more or less freely: a number of the leading banking figures of the era had gained noble status earlier, for example, Max Gomperz, Gustav Mauthner, Theodor Taussig and Carl Weiss. These were now joined by Eugen Minkus, Karl Morawitz, Wilhelm Boschan, Bernard Popper, Samuel Hahn, Ludwig Neurath and Maxim Krassny. By the end the coverage of the banking world was so complete, that one could generalise that ennoblement came automatically somehow to bank presidents, if they wanted it. And though many of these people converted, one has no impression that conversion was obligatory for the ennoblement of bankers.[44] Much the same may be said of the leading Austrian Jewish soldiers. One finds here admirals and naval captains (Kohen, Pick), Generals and Field Marshals (Ulrich, Freund, Gutherz, Slatin, Hecht, Munzel, Raft, Calm) in such profusion that it seems clear ennoblement regularly went to officers of high rank; and though conversion was much more frequent here, there were notable exceptions.[45]

But when one turns to other professional elements, one receives quite a different impression. There were, for example many representatives of the new industrial bourgeoisie of the era: coal (Sachs), steel (Strakosch and Bloch), copper (Kahler and Bondy), chemicals (Inwald, Landau), oil (Baczewski) as well as cotton (Mayer-Gunthof, Landsberger, Kubinsky, Mandl, Pollack-Parnegg, Stiassny, Doctor, Neumann), paper (Fuchs), sugar (Redlich, May, Kulp, Kuffner, Kürschner and again Strakosch and Bloch-Bauer), leather processing (Grab, Flesch), distilling (Mauthner, Friedmann) and lumber (Anhauch), which figured on the earlier list. It sounds as if everybody is here! Yet upon investigation one discovers that in many of these cases the members of the families who actually achieved rank, were not respected; further that some of the leading Jewish industrialists of the era deliberately rejected ennoblement as somehow "beneath" them (Wittgenstein, maybe Petschek).[46] Rudolf Sieghart, for instance was a converted Jew who became one of the key figures after 1900 in the Austrian central bureaucracy. He is on record as saying he felt more at ease in the pre-war era as a bourgeois *Sektionschef*, than he would have as a *neugebackener Freiherr*.[47]

From such evidence one has to judge that new nobles were now no longer

[44]See Bernhard Michel, *Banques et banquiers en Autriche*, Paris 1976, pp. 335ff.

[45]A by no means complete list of Jewish officers is in Moritz Frühling, *Biographisches Handbuch der in der k.u.k. Österr.-Ung. Armee und Kriegsmarine aktiv gedienten Offiziere, Ärzte, Truppen-Rechnungs-Führer und sonstigen Militärbeamten jüdischen Stammes*, Vienna 1911.

[46]Elizabeth Springer, *Geschichte und Kultur der Wiener Ringstrasse*, Wiesbaden 1979, p. 540; Paul Engelmann, *Letters From Ludwig Wittgenstein. With a Memoir*, Oxford 1967, p. 120.

[47]Rudolf Sieghart, *Die letzten Jahre einer Grossmacht*, Berlin 1932, p. 127.

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respected, that they were seen as social climbers and money-grubbers, religious renegades and as unreliable, and this is generally the impression one receives from the roster of other middle-class professions. The railways, insurance and the law were represented very unevenly (Bram, Bardas; Vivante, Richetti; Auspitz, Rostocki, Landesberger, Löwenstein, Fischel, Neumann, Bachrach, Schwarz-Hiller). There were prominent bureaucrats and politicians here – members of Parliament too – but also raffish international playboys and speculators of doubtful repute (Kürschner, Reitzes).

A final outstanding quality of the cohort completes the impression of unevenness. It contains a few eminent professors, mainly converts (Grünhut, Blumenstock/Halban). And a few of the eminent intellectuals who made turn-of-the-century Austria famous had noble titles left over from earlier generations (Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Pribram and Porges/Porthheim). But generally intellectuals are totally missing from our cohort. Sigmund Freud, Karl Kraus, Gustav Mahler, Franz Kafka, Egon Friedell, Heinrich Friedjung, Moritz Benedikt – none of them is here. Their absence cannot be explained as could the absence of intellectuals from our second cohort, i.e. in terms of Franz Josef's lack of interest in intellectual matters. The boycott is too massive. Indeed, if one is to credit Kraus and Benedikt, the cult of ranks and titles that we are discussing must be considered the major hatred of the intellectuals in *fin-de-siècle* Austria; both of them despised new nobles with a vengeance. So there is evidence that this new noble cohort was much more narrow than its predecessors.

Let us now consider why this third Jewish cohort was ennobled. For a first explanation, one need only look at the general development of Austria's middle class in this period, and that of the Jews of Vienna. Soon enough one will notice that the wealthier strata of that society had sustained ever more serious defeats, and were now isolated. The story is well known. Throughout the *Ausgleich* period, as education spread in the non-German linguistic regions, and as the gradual democratisation of the political suffrage gave other nationalities a vote, German Austria continuously lost ground. Whereas in mid-nineteenth century one could still claim that most of the Empire was German because most educated people were German-speaking, by 1907, when universal suffrage was introduced, the Germans had, in an absolute sense, lost voting power in Hungary and Galicia; and in the Bohemian lands, too, they were strongly on the defensive. Meanwhile, in Vienna, the Jews had been placed massively on the defensive by the rise of political antisemitism. It was at least in part to avoid criticism from the antisemites, that Franz Josef limited his distribution of business-world ennoblements after 1884.[48] In these terms, one may readily understand that the members of our cohort were not representatives of a strong, healthy upper bourgeoisie, but of a wealthy stratum in retreat. And if one studies the conversion patterns and the name-change patterns in this group, one finds more than convincing evidence of cowardice among these people.

To which one must add the fact that on the other side also there was increasing frailty in this period. The *Kaiser* was old. Until about 1908 he maintained a

[48]See Vasili, *Die Wiener Gesellschaft*, *op. cit.*, pp. 357, 383–384.

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strong hand on the distribution of honours. But thereafter in connection with his 80th birthday in 1910 matters got out of hand. On both sides of the Leitha, the last pre-war years witnessed a veritable torrent of ennoblements, as well as of other awards. Then 1914 released a large stream of battlefield awards, and in 1916 Franz Josef's death and the celebration of *Kaiser* Karl's accession to power launched a lavish distribution which continued for the remaining years of the Monarchy. Our third cohort was to a considerable extent the product of this "senility" of the Habsburg's ennoblement system. These people were not only representatives of an isolated, beleaguered upper middle class: they were also fell pillagers of an obsolete palace – and this was true especially of those who in October and November 1918 were concentrating on getting themselves ennobled before the Monarchy expired.[49]

Yet, as when assessing the earlier cohorts, so in this case it may be wise not to indulge in excess mockery when trying to assess the Jewish nobles. One may point out for example that Austria's middle-class society was now very large indeed. Vienna was a city of two million, Budapest of nearly one million, other cities were catching up; and as we have observed earlier, the Jews played a major middle-class role in all the cities. In this context clearly it was hardly possible to ennoble everyone, much less to maintain the same proportions of ennoblement as before within all professional sectors of the bourgeoisie. And one may follow up this remark by noting that in 1884, the starting year for our period, the *Kaiser* systematically decided to cut down on ennoblements in the business world. Thereafter, for twenty years he was very sparing indeed with ennoblement in Austria, though he became decidedly liberal with it in Hungary.[50] And meanwhile he developed a vast hierarchy of lesser titles, awards and medals which were given out annually to deserving citizens. If one wants a true image of the distribution and of the very great popularity of honours in old Austria before the war, one must look not just at the necessarily incomplete ennoblement record, but at a periodical entitled: *Zeitung für Ordens- und Titelverleihungen*, which a certain "Gustav Waldheim" published in Vienna from 1909 until 1917. In the illustrated pages of this journal it is more than clear that not just renegade and playboy Jews were interested in fancy titles in old Austria. Right down through the new urban society it made no difference whether one was German- Czech- Polish- or Magyar-speaking, whether one was a Jew or an antisemite, everyone was interested in ranks and titles. The sociologist Oszkar Jaszi has hinted that this interest was a major factor binding together Greater Austria's bourgeoisie.[51]

[49]One thinks of Manfred Weisz and Tivadar Wolfner, Budapest industrialists and war-profiteers, who received their baronies on 16th September 1918; of Leopold Pollack von Parnegg, who was made a baron on 2nd June 1918, and then managed on 2nd October, 1918, to have the title bestowed also on the widow of his deceased son; of Wilhelm Eduard Hardy, a Vienna industrialist who received his ennoblement on 29th October 1918; of Hermann Tschiggfrey, the managing director of the Kassa-Oderberg railway, who became *Edler* von Rauerdorf on 1st November 1918; and of engineer Emil Homann, *Ritter* von Herimberg, who managed to become a baron on the day of his resignation as Minister of Public Works, 11th November 1918. Further examples may be found in József Gerö, *A királyi könyvek*, Budapest 1940; and Karl Friedrich von Frank zu Döfering, *Alt-österreichisches Adelslexikon*, Vienna 1928.

[50]McCagg, *Jewish Nobles, op. cit.*, chapter 6.

[51]Oszkar Jaszi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, Chicago 1929, p. 15.

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There is testimony enough about the seriousness of this rage. As we have seen, fairly large scale sale of nobility was Habsburg government policy from the 1860s onwards. One might well imagine therefore that ridicule and mockery would be common in inner circles of the *Hofburg* by the turn of the century. Yet in 1908, Rudolf Sieghart, who, as mentioned earlier, had become a key figure in the state bureaucracy, warned the Austrian Prime Minister of the day that if the speculator-banker, Bernhard Wetzlar, were allowed to gain entry into the *Herrenhaus*, inevitably other disreputable people would follow, and "one of the Austrian Government's most significant instruments of power would become a thing of the past".[52] Comparably in 1917, the knowing observer and eventual minister, Josef Redlich, confided despairingly to his political diary that *Kaiser* Karl was scattering the highest orders and decorations in "an entirely blind fashion", implying that he felt the decorations still worth having.[53] And the public's passionate response to this "blind" distribution confirms that the Monarchy was squandering measurable power over the middle classes.

Such evidence recalls once again the great difference between many of today's attitudes and those of the time. Today, at least in the United States (England certainly being an exception), the tendency is to see ennoblement as useless vanity. Then, before the deluge, when the feudal world of the past was still close at hand, things looked differently. Today we regard these new Austrian nobles as fools, who chased will-o'-the-wisps without recognising the fragility of the world in which they lived, without sensing the catastrophes to come. Such veterans of the time as Stefan Zweig and Albert Fuchs tell us another story, however. For them the essence of the old world was not its fragility, but its seeming stability. *Gott*, *Kaiser* and *Vater* seemed three absolute immutabilities in their childhood.[54] The catastrophes may have been in the offing, but as yet they were no more than bad dreams.

In this context even the last spate of ennoblement in the Habsburg Empire emerges as a legitimate gamble, not unlike the first. Corrupt, – an exchange between a senile monarchial institution and a desperately isolated new rich stratum – but "foolish"? Two generations of modern-minded Austrian burghers and of enlightened Jews had opted for ennoblement, because the State offered them this alternative, and no other, to keep in touch with it. Why should the third not do the same, when the same alternative was offered, and no other. There was a risk, but – to make our point – it has always been risky to live in Central Europe, and it is always risky to live in a backward society subject to rapid modernisation.

VI

Let us go back to Herzmanovsky and Fellini with whose imagery we began this investigation. They admired how the middle classes of pre-1914 Europe sang

[52]Cited in Margarete Sieghardt, 'Rudolf Sieghardt und das Ministerium Beck', in *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur*, XVI (1972), pp. 552–553.
[53]Josef Redlich, *Politisches Tagebuch*, Graz 1953/1954, II, p. 243.
[54]See Albert Fuchs, *Geistige Strömungen in Österreich*, Vienna 1978, p. vii.

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Verdi *fortissimo* while their ship was sinking. Having reviewed here the record of three generations of Jewish nobles in Austria, we are left with the same feeling.

We have posed as basic to an understanding of the Jewish nobles the dramatic fact that in the Habsburg Empire a large segment of Eastern Jewry modernised, not completely, but on a large scale and with considerable aplomb. They came out of "medieval fanaticism" into a comfortable world of individualism much like ours. Indeed many of us regard the modernised Habsburg Jews as our spiritual forebears. In the course of this successful modernisation process, we have seen that certain leaders of Austrian Jewry found it reasonable to enter into a relationship with the existing political authority, the Habsburg State, and they were offered ennoblement as a means of doing this.

Initially only a narrow intelligentsia accepted, and did so in exchange for real value – individual escape from the discriminatory laws. Later on the gains were much less. The old laws were abolished, the Jews became part of the Habsburg bourgeoisie. Some of them acquired economic power through the new capitalism. But the bourgeoisie to which they were cleaving was crippled from the start. The State in which they lived required help, and offered ennoblement in exchange and as a morale booster. A new generation of distinctly more Jewish leaders – our second cohort – accepted the bid as a matter of legitimate risk. And much the same goes for the third generation, when the lameness of bourgeoisie and State was compounded by the lower middle-class hatred directed against Jews. Despite the radically diminished value of ennoblement, and a much more critical attitude towards it in parts of Jewish society, a significant – and quite sufficiently "Jewish" – sector of Jewry took the risk of accepting the bid.

In a basically underdeveloped, backward world such as Central and Eastern Europe was in the nineteenth century, one cannot condemn, indiscriminately, the vanities of the past, even though catastrophes came after them. In the case here studied the seeming frivolity of ennoblement overlay a demonstrable willingness on the side both of the State and of the new class in old Austria to co-operate in the pursuit of modernisation. Unfortunately, as symptomised by the archaic exchange of ennoblement between the State and the "new people" of society, the tools for a socially just outcome were somehow lacking. Society was not so much vain and frivolous in the old Monarchy, as it was faced with the need to make do without adequate tools.

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